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Letter dated 17 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Declaration on a Decade of Addressing Conventional Ammunition Management within the United Nations (see annex I).* This political declaration was launched by the Federal Republic of Germany to capture the substantive progress made in the area of conventional ammunition management under the auspices of the United Nations in the past 10 years, when the first group of governmental experts was convened on this topic. The declaration is also submitted in the light of the convening, in 2020, of the group of governmental experts mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/55.

The declaration was formulated following constructive consultations and exchanges with Member States. Its content was informed by the work of relevant stakeholders in civil society working in the area of conventional ammunition management in support of States.

Given the severe security risks and negative socioeconomic impact emanating from ineffective ammunition stockpile management, as well as the risk of diversion, effective ammunition management requires a synergistic and comprehensive approach. Such an approach necessitates broad cooperation with the United Nations, as well as consideration of synergies with relevant international instruments and frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this regard, the declaration recognizes the various efforts undertaken by, inter alia, the United Nations, regional organizations, the World Customs Organization and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). It further acknowledges the role of relevant instruments such as the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the Arms Trade Treaty. In its second part, the declaration contains a pledge composed of various actions that concretely address the challenges posed by the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus. Through the declaration, States commit themselves to addressing critical issues in this area, such as those related to stockpile management, diversion risk reduction and international cooperation and assistance. The pledge also recognizes the value of the Safer*Guard*

* The annex is being circulated in the language of submission only.

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Programme, the United Nations knowledge management platform for conventional ammunition issues.

The declaration seeks swift progress in a coherent and integrative way. Thus far, it has been supported by 74 States (see annex II).* States may still, and are indeed encouraged to, support the declaration. I shall periodically provide updates when additional States join the declaration.

I request that the present letter and its annexes be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 99.

(*Signed*) Christoph **Heusgen**

Annex I to the letter dated 17 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Securing Ammunition, Protecting Lives

Declaration on a Decade of Addressing Conventional Ammunition Management within the United Nations

New York, June 2018

On the occasion of ten years of efforts in the United Nations addressing problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus,[1]

And on the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes the inextricable link between peace and sustainable development, including the relationship between illicit arms flows, just, peaceful and inclusive societies, and development,

We underscore — while affirming that conventional ammunition management is a State's sovereign responsibility — the urgency for governments to further address conventional ammunition management in view of both the severe safety and security risks emanating from ineffective stockpile practices around the world.

Deeply mindful of the humanitarian dangers and socioeconomic impacts posed by unintended and accidental explosions at ammunition sites, including displacement, injury and death,

Acutely aware of the safety considerations related to conventional ammunition management and the imperative to prevent unintended and accidental explosions,

Alarmed, in particular, by the number of unintended and accidental explosions at ammunition sites, which reached on average one every two to three weeks since 2000, and which represents a shared tragedy experienced in all parts of the inhabited world,[2]

Aware that illicit ammunition supply patterns in areas of conflict are often distinct from arms supply patterns, and that the value of illicit weaponry — often recycled from conflict to conflict — depends on an uninterrupted supply of ammunition,[3]

Acutely concerned over the risk of diversion of ammunition and explosives to illicit markets, especially for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices that are increasingly used to harm civilians in both conflict and non-conflict settings,

Distressed by the cross-cutting negative consequences of ineffectively-managed conventional ammunition, including the destruction of livelihoods, infrastructure and the environment; mass displacement; and the hindering of gender equality and the empowerment of women;

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[1] Group of Governmental Experts established pursuant to resolution 61/72 convened in 2008.

[2] Small Arms Survey, *UEMS Handbook: Excess stockpiles as liabilities rather than assets*, p. 10–12; www.smallarmssurvey.org.

[3] S/2011/255.

Recognizing that adequate stockpile management involves the national assessment of stockpiles to determine surplus conventional ammunition, namely, the ammunition that does not constitute an operational need,

Noting that surplus conventional ammunition is too often perceived as an asset, whereas it should be addressed primarily as a liability;

1. *We affirm* that destruction is one of the preferred solutions for surplus stockpiles of conventional ammunition, not only from a safety and security perspective, but also when considering the costs of destruction over the costs associated with safe, long-term storage and maintenance;[4]

2. *We note* that the costs of addressing damage caused by unintended explosions tend to be far greater than preventative, effective stockpile management procedures including destruction;

3. *We acknowledge* the contribution of safe and secure management of conventional ammunition to the adequate implementation of United Nations arms embargoes and peacekeeping mandates, including Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programmes and Security Sector Reform, and the role of United Nations missions in this regard;

4. *We underline* the importance of safe and secure management of conventional ammunition in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including those related to peace, security and strong institutions, gender equality, and sustainable cities and communities;

5. *We recognize* the complexity of, but also the opportunities for, safe and secure management of conventional ammunition stockpiles and the need for technical discussions with a view to sustainable life-cycle management;

6. *We acknowledge* the need for on-going discussions among relevant stakeholders and, in this regard, *encourage* that discussions include the effects of current stockpile management practices on the safety and security of all civilians, for inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches;

7. *We welcome* the ongoing efforts related to conventional ammunition in the United Nations and beyond, including the General Assembly, the International Civilian Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization, legal instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty, Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the Firearms Protocol supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and regional, subregional and other relevant multilateral frameworks;

8. *We underscore* the technical nature of conventional ammunition stockpile management and, therefore, *reiterate support for* the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Safer*G*uard Programme, in particular the use and the wide dissemination of the practical, voluntary International Ammunition Technical Guidelines and their accompanying implementation-support tools and resources,[5]

9. *We recognize* the importance of, in addition to technical capacity, integration of conventional ammunition management normative frameworks, including laws and regulations, structures and procedures, development of training and doctrine, procurement of proper equipment and maintenance, personnel

[4] S/2015/289, paragraph 49.

[5] www.un.org/disarmament/ammunition.

management and infrastructure, in order to ensure the sustainability of ammunition management;

10. *We emphasize* the vital necessity of the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building to interested States, and *note* the existence of various mechanisms through which to offer and receive international cooperation and assistance, including the United Nations *Saferl*Guard Programme and the United Nations Mine Action Service;

11. *We support* the Secretary-General's view that the systematic collection, adequate recording and publication of information concerning the markings on recovered illicit ammunition for small arms and light weapons would enhance transparency and accountability in the arms and ammunition trade and help to significantly limit the scope of the illicit trade;[6]

12. *We underline* the need for better international cooperation in tracing of illicit weapons and ammunition and, in that context, *encourage* States to make full use of the INTERPOL Ballistic Information Network which allows police to develop new investigative leads based on ballistic cross-comparison;

13. *We are cognizant* of the need to undertake additional efforts at all levels — national, subregional, regional and global — to address conventional ammunition management;

14. *And we recall* the recommendation of the Open-ended Working Group to Negotiate an International Tracing Instrument that the specific issue of small arms and light weapons ammunition be addressed in a comprehensive manner as part of a separate process conducted within the framework of the United Nations.[7]

In view of the aforementioned, we pledge to:

I. *Engage* actively in the informal consultative process on pertinent issues related to problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus upon which progress can be made, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/255;

II. *Explore* synergies with relevant related activities within the United Nations and other international processes, in order to make coherent progress;

III. *Undertake* the following actions at the national, subregional, regional and global levels, as appropriate;

(a) To assess if conventional ammunition stockpile management needs to be addressed nationally as a matter of urgency and to take up possible critical national ammunition management issues as a matter of priority, aware of the voluntary option to make use of the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines;

(b) To develop, as appropriate, national action plans on ammunition management — and accompanying project proposals that could form a basis for international assistance;

(c) To integrate, where relevant, ammunition-management-related indicators and measures into national implementation plans for the Sustainable Development Goals;

[6] S/2011/255, paragraph 26.
[7] A/60/88, paragraph 27.

(d) If in a position to do so to provide assistance to States requesting support, including technical and financial resources, with a view to ensuring measurable impact;

(e) To support the work of the UN Safer*Guard* Programme on reviewing, developing and disseminating the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines;

(f) And to engage in on-going, open discussions on this matter with all relevant stakeholders, including States, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations including women groups, and relevant private-sector entities.

Annex II to the letter dated 17 September 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

1. Albania
2. Andorra
3. Antigua and Barbuda
4. Argentina
5. Austria
6. Bahamas
7. Barbados
8. Belgium
9. Benin
10. Bosnia and Herzegovina
11. Bulgaria
12. Burkina Faso
13. Burundi
14. Cabo Verde
15. Cameroon
16. Côte d'Ivoire
17. Croatia
18. Cyprus
19. Czechia
20. Democratic Republic of the Congo
21. Denmark
22. Dominican Republic
23. Estonia
24. Finland
25. France
26. Georgia
27. Ghana
28. Greece
29. Guinea
30. Haiti
31. Honduras
32. Hungary
33. Iceland
34. Ireland
35. Italy
36. Jamaica
37. Japan
38. Latvia
39. Liberia
40. Liechtenstein
41. Lithuania
42. Luxembourg
43. Madagascar
44. Malawi
45. Malaysia
46. Malta
47. Mauritania
48. Monaco
49. Montenegro
50. Netherlands

51. Niger
52. Nigeria
53. Norway
54. Palau
55. Panama
56. Poland
57. Portugal
58. Republic of Korea
59. Republic of Moldova
60. Romania
61. Saint Lucia
62. San Marino
63. Serbia
64. Sierra Leone
65. Slovakia
66. Slovenia
67. Spain
68. Sweden
69. Switzerland
70. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
71. Togo
72. Trinidad and Tobago
73. Ukraine
74. Zambia